



Case Study

Raising awareness and promoting a positive culture towards reducing the impact that George Regional Hospital (GRH) has on the environment



George Regional Hospital, George, South Africa

1. Global Green and Healthy Hospitals (GGHH) Agenda Goals

- Leadership
- Waste

2. Hospital Goal

The aim was to implement a meaningful, local response to improve sustainable practices in response to the global threat of climate change.

Specific goals:

- To increase awareness in the hospital and community that George Hospital is reducing the impact it has on the environment by introducing the *George Goes Green Campaign*.
- Mobilise leadership and send a powerful message to other hospitals, and policy makers in both the Western Cape and nationally about the importance of environmental sustainability.
- Engage staff across all disciplines and staff groups across the hospital on a single issue to create a more engaged and motivated workforce.
- To increase awareness that Health Care Risk Waste (HCRW) can be reduced by incorporating different practices.
- Save money and reprioritise funds to deliver improved health care services to patients (create public value).

3. Progress Achieved

- Numerous events have been hosted, promotional products have been distributed and signage made visible across GRH.
- Results from the staff survey shows that 91% of staff are aware of the George Goes Green Campaign and what it aims at doing.
- The survey shows that most staff are interested and excited about doing the right thing for the environment.

4. Identified Issues

A detailed situational analysis of the problem was conducted using root cause analysis tools to identify key drivers for possible intervention. Knowledge, skills and attitudes of staff was an important driver of current waste management practices in the hospital.

Most staff members were not aware of the negative impact the hospital can have on the environment and how they can implement practices into their daily routine to reduce the impact. A reduce, reuse, recycle culture had not been adopted by the staff. Therefore, staff needed to be made aware of an approach and practices that could assist.

Availability of appropriate-sized, correctly labelled and coloured bins in clinical and non-clinical areas was an issue. Signage across GRH for waste was inconsistent and caused confusion for staff and public. Thus, staff were not enabled to take responsibility for reduction of waste.

5. Strategy Implemented

A group of staff, led by the Hospital CEO, established *The Creative Waste Group* to address the issues identified. The selected team members included senior staff who were both motivated and in a position to champion and drive sustainable practices throughout the hospital. The team comprised the Human Resources and Facility Manager, Assistant Director Support Services, Contract Manager, Pharmacy Manager, the Quality Assurance Manager, an Improving Global Health Fellow and a Public Relations Intern.

The project team elected to develop and implement *a hospital-wide awareness campaign that will promote environmental sustainability*. The “George Hospital Goes Green” campaign is a strategy to continuously apply pressure on the health system in order to affect a sustained shift in behaviour. A range of awareness activities have been already implemented by the team, which has generated local media exposure for the campaign.

Awareness brings change to culture and it was decided that consistent signage needed to be designed and put up around the hospital, different promotional products would be distributed to constantly remind the staff of the campaign and events would be hosted regularly to ensure that staff remains interested. Other options would also be tried and tested in an attempt to create awareness. International events were also used to the advantage of the creative waste group such as Earth Hour and World Environment Day to bring about increased awareness. The funding for the project was sourced from the Health Facility Board.

6. Implementation process

Signage

Consistent signage and infographics, to be used in clinical and public areas, were designed and approved by the group. These infographics were used on the handmade recycling bins, general waste bins and the HCRW bins and guided the user as to what could be thrown into the bin. The signage was designed in consultation with different staff groups, this ensured that they assisted in making the signage effective.

Promotional Products

Lanyards, laptop stickers and bags were designed, procured and distributed amongst staff and members of the public as a constant reminder of the George Green Campaign. A graphic GRH tree was designed and placed on these products to symbolise the hospitals focus on being environmentally friendly.

Audio-visual

A video was created to inform the staff that a change was coming and what had been taking place in the meantime in the hospital. This video was sent out via internal communication, on WhatsApp groups and played on a television for the public to view. This television is placed in the pharmacy waiting area, on average 4700 prescriptions are issued per month, meaning that the footage was seen by 4700 members of the public.

Events

The first George Goes Green event took place during Earth Hour, the staff participated by switching off their lights and all non-essential equipment for the weekend. Next George Goes Green hosted GRH's first Beach Clean-up which allowed staff and their family members to become involved. This was a roaring success as it made the public aware of the direction in which GRH was heading. World Environment Day was used as an education day which consisted of guest speakers, educational games and film screenings. Two "idea trees" were also put up in prominent areas of the facility where staff and members of the public could write their ideas and pledges and pin it on the tree. These events were advertised with posters and PA announcements reaching all staff and public in the hospital. By taking part in these events the staff became aware of the hospital goal and started showing interest.

Pilot recycling in clinical environment

In order to introduce recycling in clinical environment, two wards were identified as pilot areas. With the initial introduction to pilot wards it would assist the group to identify problems and solutions before implementing the campaign into the whole hospital.

Word of mouth

Word of mouth has also played a large role in creating awareness. Staff were encouraged to engage in greener practices as well as bring forth their ideas on what the hospital could do to improve the campaign and bring about a change. The Emergency Medical Service (EMS), a department which the campaign had not reached yet, requested information on how they could get involved after hearing about. This occurred after being informed of The George Goes Green Campaign and its aims.

Feedback

While implementing the pilot phase the GRH newsletter was used to make the staff aware that a change was coming. All the progress of the pilot phase has also been shared with the staff and public. Data is shown on the notice board in the pilot ward and these figures can also be seen the hospital newsletter.

7. Tracking Progress

A survey has been set up to identify how informed staff are with regards to green practices and the George Goes Green Campaign. The Creative Waste Group also tracks the progress by analysing the HCRW and the recycling data. Progress reports are reviewed at project meetings and by hospital management. The statistics are shared at various staff meetings and reported in monthly hospital newsletters. A decrease in HCRW and an increase in recycling shows that affected staff are aware and actively trying to make a difference.

8. Challenges and key learning

The awareness campaign itself is a series of activities designed to be small wins. Some activities were planned by the Creative Waste Group as part of an initial strategy; however, implementation is also a dynamic process. Having identified a theme that supports the change, the team are vigilant for all channels where they can communicate the message. Recognising and Celebrating *World Environment Day* with a hospital-wide programme of activities was not part of the original awareness campaign but was used as an opportunity to spread the message. The project team are primed to take advantage of such opportunities as they arise. The campaign is purposefully positive, spreading a message of optimism, for staff to gain motivation from the belief that they can make a difference.

In the future a more concrete plan needs to be put in place to ensure that the campaign stays sustainable and relevant. Different role-players can also be used to create awareness to make the campaign more effective such as line managers creating awareness in their own departments / wards. Identifying champions is critical. In operating theatres, a senior anaesthetist is highly motivated and willing to drive the activities. In one of the surgical wards, the housekeeping supervisor is champions waste segregation, while in the pharmacy, the manager is the champion.

9. Next Steps

The campaign will be implemented throughout the whole hospital and the progress will be tracked. The progress will be used to encourage staff and create further awareness. After launching the George Goes Green Campaign, energy was identified as the next major resource that The Creative Waste Group should focus on. This is forms part of our next steps as staff need to be made aware of the excessive wastage of energy taking place and how this can be changed.

Demographic Information

George Regional Hospital (GRH) provides provincial health care services to patients living in the Garden Route and Central Karoo Districts. This is a largely rural area with a population of approximately 650 000 and a catchment area 62 185 km².

George Regional Hospital is the only public hospital in George and offers secondary and some tertiary level services. The hospital employs 700 staff members. It has 275 beds, on average the emergency centre assists more than 4000 patients per month and 5400 outpatients. George Hospital supports district hospitals in rural and outlying sub-districts, where they consult referred patients and train medical officers and professional nurses.

Submission Date: June 2019